



**Professor Claire Halpin**

Professor of Plant Biology and Biotechnology and Deputy Head of the Division of Plant Sciences, James Hutton Institute



**Build your confidence and don't set your own limitations.**



In secondary school I started to develop an interest in Biology and Chemistry. I studied Botany at University College Dublin for my first degree, followed by a teaching qualification and then a Masters in Pharmacology because I still had a hankering for Biomedical Science. I realised then that it was definitely Plant Sciences that I enjoyed and went on to study this for my PhD at the universities of Leicester and Warwick whilst I was employed as a part-time research assistant.

Other than staying in plant science I didn't have a clear game plan. I moved to ICI (Zeneca) Seeds to work as a Postdoctoral Fellow on a European Union funded project. I received a good deal of support and was encouraged to take responsibility for project management. I ended up running the project and was made permanent.

Whilst at Zeneca I contributed to some great, high quality research. However, the poor public

perception of genetically modified plants restricted the projects I was working on. I made the decision to move back into academia when my husband took up a lectureship at St Andrews. I was awarded funding for a collaborative project grant with him at the same time as being offered a lectureship at Dundee. Had I not found a permanent position I could have used the grant to work in his lab, however it allowed me to start my own group with the academic freedom to work on what I was passionate about.

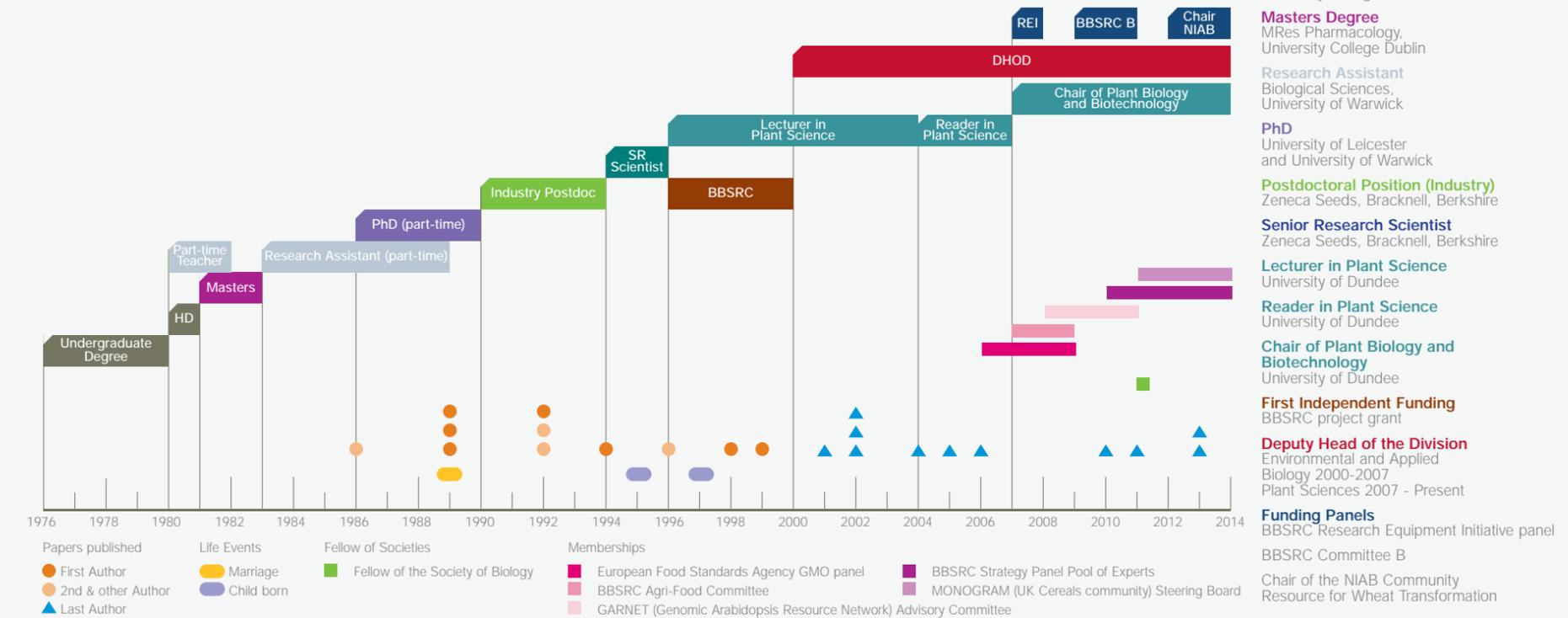
My time working in industry encouraged me to work collaboratively with labs all over the UK, Europe, and beyond, something I continue to do with my own research group, particularly through our involvement with the BBSRC Sustainable Bioenergy Centre (BSBEC).

I found the transition between industry and academia a very natural one; I'd encourage

anyone who wants to move into industry to find a position where they can keep publishing if they would like to keep their options open for a return to academia.

#### A Day in my Life

Before work each morning I spend one to two hours concentrating on any writing I need to do. At work I spend a lot of time in real or virtual meetings: with my students and postdocs to discuss their research and papers we are writing; with collaborators and with administrative boards. Any breaks in the day are spent analysing data and responding to emails. Though I don't perform any research myself anymore I help out with big harvests! In the evening and at the weekend I work at home: writing and editing papers and grants, researching scientific literature and reviewing papers and grants of other groups.



**Undergraduate Degree**  
University College Dublin  
*BSc Hons Botany*

**Higher Diploma in Education**  
University College Dublin

**Masters Degree**  
MRes Pharmacology,  
University College Dublin

**Research Assistant**  
Biological Sciences,  
University of Warwick

**PhD**  
University of Leicester  
and University of Warwick

**Postdoctoral Position (Industry)**  
Zeneca Seeds, Bracknell, Berkshire

**Senior Research Scientist**  
Zeneca Seeds, Bracknell, Berkshire

**Lecturer in Plant Science**  
University of Dundee

**Reader in Plant Science**  
University of Dundee

**Chair of Plant Biology and Biotechnology**  
University of Dundee

**First Independent Funding**  
BBSRC project grant

**Deputy Head of the Division**  
Environmental and Applied  
Biology 2000-2007  
Plant Sciences 2007 - Present

**Funding Panels**  
BBSRC Research Equipment Initiative panel  
BBSRC Committee B

Chair of the NIAB Community  
Resource for Wheat Transformation